

Summary of Proceedings: How to Change the Picture

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The U.S. education abroad community has strived for decades to make opportunities to study abroad accessible to as many undergraduate students as possible and has sought to increase participation by students of color and those of limited financial means, who are underrepresented within the education abroad population. This effort at achieving greater diversity in education abroad has had some notable successes on individual campuses and with particular programs. Despite these efforts, however, there remains a conspicuous underrepresentation of African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students among the ever-growing population of U.S. students who study abroad. This underrepresentation appears closely tied to, though not synonymous with, a broadly held view that the fullest participation of interested students in education abroad is hindered by the cost—both real and imagined—of participation.

Addressing diversity in education abroad participation has received enhanced attention in the new millennium because of the tremendous growth in study abroad activities as well the unprecedented levels of public attention and policy interest. About 200,000 U.S. undergraduate students have completed a credit-bearing study abroad experience this past school year, and that number appears to be growing at a rate approaching 10 percent per year. Program opportunities now include an incredibly diverse set of options in terms of destination, subject matter, and duration. Education abroad activities now regularly attract major media coverage, whether it is about self-initiated overseas work experiences¹, multiple international sojourns that exemplify a new type of American student², or the challenge facing U.S. higher education institutions of managing enrollments and tuition receipts because study abroad programming has attained high levels of student interest³. Even the recent press attention on evacuations of U.S. citizens from Lebanon in the face of regional violence there, revealed a conspicuous collection of organized and independent overseas study activities.⁴

To this student demand and public awareness have been added clear and articulate calls for greater U.S. citizen engagement in the world through education abroad. Beginning with the report on improving access in 2003⁵ issued by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Education Abroad Subcommittee on Underrepresentation, and the corresponding call by the

¹ *New York Times*, February 2006.

² *Washington Post*, August 2006.

³ *Wall Street Journal*, 2006

⁴ See for example, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July/August 2006.

⁵ "Securing America's Future: Global Education for a Global Age," NAFSA: Association of International Educators, November 18, 2003.

late Senator Paul Simon for a new comprehensive scholarship program, the exposition of the public policy merits to education abroad has been compelling. The following excerpt is from the commission's report subsequent to Simon's advocacy for a new Abraham Lincoln Scholarship Program:

"In global affairs—whether the region is Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, or the Middle East and whether the issue involves diplomacy, foreign affairs, national security, or commerce and finance—what nations do not know exacts a heavy toll. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and for that of the nation, it is essential that college graduates today become globally competent."⁶

This is but one view on the public good that is identified with increased overseas study participation and enhanced programmatic opportunities throughout the world—but it is a view broadly held.

President George W. Bush and senior members of his Cabinet—including Secretaries of State and Education, Condoleezza Rice and Margaret Spellings—have stated that it is in the national interest that more Americans take part in meaningful and well-grounded education abroad experiences as young adults. It is similarly in the national interest that this experience be shared by a more representative cross-section of U.S. students.

Education abroad experiences ought not to be the primary purview of upper-middle-class, White, female students. Kalamazoo College President Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran has spoken eloquently on the nation's interest in having globally competent citizens, and the need to assure ourselves that all undergraduate students attain these skills as they prepare for their lives after college. Wilson-Oyelaran said in part, "I would argue that the skill of intercultural competence coupled with a global perspective is essential for anyone who aspires to provide leadership in the 21st century." An essential element of addressing this public policy conclusion is ensuring that all U.S. undergraduate students have an equal opportunity to participate in an education abroad experience, and that the nation simultaneously ensure that no particular group of the college student population be excluded from that set of experiences. The United States clearly cannot afford to have disenfranchised its future leaders from this preparation for their civic and professional responsibilities by virtue of race or ethnicity, or because of economic limitations and impediments.

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⁶ "Global Competence & National Needs," Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, November 2005.

In 2006, the Year of Study Abroad⁷—a symbolic expression of interest by the U.S. Senate in the need to engage more Americans in an education abroad experience—the Academy for Education Development convened this Colloquium on Diversity in Education Abroad to review the state of affairs of underrepresentation in the U.S. study abroad population, with a particular focus on access for students of color and those of limited financial means. In conceiving this colloquium, AED had three goals:

- To advance understanding of the underlying factors that cause certain groups of students to be underrepresented within the education abroad population;
- To bring together a new constellation of interested stakeholders among higher education generally and international educators specifically to review, discuss, and recommend solutions to improve diversity in education abroad; and
- To initiate a new national effort to address successfully diversity in education abroad in the immediate future.

To achieve those goals, the colloquium has convened a group of speakers, facilitators, and participants drawing from a cross-section of U.S. higher education and education abroad programs. Leaders—both on U.S. campuses and among study abroad program providers, as well as educational and professional association representatives—have presented their views, discussed various aspects of the issue, and set out recommended actions to engage affirmatively a more representative group of students among the education abroad population. The response to the colloquium invitation reflected the strong interest in this topic among international educators. The 116 registrants included a diverse cross-section of individuals from public and private institutions, educational organizations, and government. A list of participants is included with these proceedings in Appendix 3.

Diversity in Education Abroad: Why It Matters to the Nation

In her plenary address, Dr. Wilson-Oyelaran drew on Martin Luther King's words, spoken in 1961, to illustrate the importance of global interconnectedness: "All life is interrelated. We are all caught up in a web of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." Study abroad remains a key strategy for conveying what Dr. Wilson-Oyelaran described as the skill of intercultural competence. Building on that notion, she explained that "the limited participation of students of color in education abroad has consequences at both the national and personal levels." She outlined the benefits education abroad provides in advancing both learning and careers by achieving global competency skills. These skills are important to corporate America, to the country's diplomatic

⁷ S.Res. 308, 109th Congress, passed the U.S. Senate November 10, 2005. The resolution sets 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad.

interests, and to individual students and their personal growth. Dr. Wilson-Oyelaran articulated and stressed the importance of a renewed effort to engage U.S. undergraduate students successfully, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic means, in education abroad.

Dr. Wilson-Oyelaran also commented on the paucity of scholarly examination of why African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students are conspicuously absent from our education abroad enrollments. While overall U.S. student participation in overseas study programs continues to grow at a steady rate of about 10 percent per year, the profile of those participants remains largely unchanged in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and economic means.

What We Know about Diversity in Education Abroad

Colloquium presenters David Comp from the University of Chicago, Nicole Norfles from the Council on Opportunity in Education, and Wolfgang Schlör from the University of Pittsburgh, spoke about what U.S. higher education does and does not know about minority and lower socio-economic student participation in education abroad programs. The telling reality is that there are comparatively little existing data on participation rates beyond the annual survey published in *Open Doors* by the Institute for International Education. There is also little by way of scholarly literature, and much of what is available has been produced only since 1980. As Comp commented, "there is obviously a need for more rigorous and advanced research on minority students studying abroad." The colloquium's discussions led to a clear conclusion that a new effort to expand research and analysis about education abroad participation rates, and the underlying motivations and impediments, is in order.

Within that context, however, Comp outlined the demographic picture of participation for the 2003-04 academic year showing that nearly 84 percent of all U.S. undergraduate study abroad participants were White and 65 percent were female. The overall percentage of students studying abroad remained largely stable for the past decade, while female participation rates showed a slow increase. With regard to students of color, only 5 percent of participating students were Hispanic American, and less than 3.5 percent were African American. Asian Americans represented slightly better than 6 percent. These percentages are generally in line with the figures for minority students studying abroad over the past decade---Hispanic American student participation is basically flat, though African Americans and Asian Americans are participating at slightly higher percentages than in the early 1990s.

The problem is drawn into high relief when minority study abroad percentages are compared to the minority percentages of the overall undergraduate population. In 2002, from the most recently available U.S. Department of Education data, just over 67 percent of all enrolled students

at degree-granting institutions were White (with an 83.2 percent participation rate in study abroad); 11.9 percent were African American (3.4 percent studying abroad); and 10 percent were Hispanic American (5.1 percent studying abroad). The Asian American student enrollments were about 6.5 percent (6 percent studying abroad).

U.S. higher education does not understand fully and, therefore, cannot reasonably expect to address effectively this underrepresentation. Why are students of color as well as those of limited means unable or unwilling to participate in education abroad programs? The simple explanations of an earlier time, that more money in the form of scholarships would address this problem, have proven to be inadequate. Margery Ganz, director of study abroad at Spelman College, has frequently been quoted as saying, "Money is a necessary condition to be able to study abroad; it is not, however, a sufficient condition."

Norfles and Schlör provided instructive insights from contemporary data collection and analysis that each has conducted in recent years. Norfles' work with the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education on policy issues related to low-income, first generation, and disabled college students, has included specific attention to issues related to access to education abroad opportunities. From three separate studies—one of TRIO program directors on U.S. campuses⁸ in 2002 and the other two more recent student surveys—Norfles identified a set of factors that appear to effect positively education abroad participation among students served by TRIO programs, including lower-income and minority students. Those factors include: improving communications and networking with professional colleagues that serve diverse populations and offer intervention programs for low-income and minority students; addressing the specific needs of each affected population regarding financial aid and information; targeting diverse student populations early and advocating for the benefits of an education abroad experience; and proactively engaging students of color and limited income who have studied abroad to recruit their peers.

Focusing on a broader set of activities than just education abroad, Schlör reported on minority student participation in international education. His study—undertaken in 2004 and 2005—showed strong correlations between minority student participation in studying abroad and the diversity of an institution's study abroad advising staff and, to a lesser extent, language faculty. His research also documented a correlation of education abroad participation rates with dedicated programming that targets minority students, such as specialized advising. Interestingly, these correlations were stronger among private institutions than among public institutions. His research experience on this project, however, also revealed problems with

⁸ TRIO programs are U.S. government educational equal opportunity programs—including Student Support Services, Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Programs, Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Educational Opportunity Centers. TRIO programs—the first started in 1965—now serve nearly a million students.

arriving at a complete picture of study abroad practices on U.S. campuses. Response rates were less than ideal and the available data from surveyed institutions were incomplete and insufficiently detailed in their breakdown to achieve the detailed analysis his study had sought to perform. In this regard, according to Schlör, there is a clear reluctance among international educators either to track or provide racial demographic data on education abroad issues, even though this type of tracking is routine in other segments of higher education.

What's Working in Achieving Diversity in Education Abroad

The data on barriers to participation by students of color and of limited financial means, and the analysis of participation rate correlations for these students are suggestive of what strategies U.S. higher education might utilize to achieve better diversity in education abroad. The colloquium asked three presenters— Laurie Black of the School for International Training (SIT), Margery Ganz of Spelman College, and Dévora Grynspan of Northwestern University to address institution-specific solutions to greater participation among students of color and limited means, in the hopes of utilizing their respective experiences as role models and prototypical examples of how to attain better participation rates.

Black, Ganz, and Grynspan collectively presented three largely successful models of improving minority participation: Black recruited minority students primarily from HBCUs for a third-party education abroad provider with programs focused in the developing world; Ganz worked with African American female students at a private college; and Grynspan engaged Hispanic American and other minority students at both public and private universities in the Midwest for programs in Latin American and China. These models included several common characteristics. Paraphrasing Black's retrospective, three elements of the models appear paramount:

- Successfully engaging students of limited means and from targeted minority populations is never instantaneous and must be approached as a long-term commitment; the effort is resource intensive.
- Successful efforts are built on strong, sustained institutional relationships that respect the parties involved and that feature high levels of trust.
- A focus on circumstances—both institutional and individual—is essential to achieve better diversity in education abroad programming.

Money is also critical to achieve the goal of improving diversity in study abroad. Resources are needed both for scholarship assistance and for dedicated staff attention to serve the student populations that education abroad administrators hope to attract. In some cases, these resources were clearly being tapped into from outside the study abroad program or office, by utilizing grant funds and national competitions for student assistance. In each of these examples, the institution or organization was exerting

additional efforts and expending additional resources to reach beyond the student populations they might otherwise have expected to serve through a more “routine” approach to recruitment and programming. Indeed, Gynspan explained that her successful experiences were difficult to sustain when funding flows from the initial project initiatives ended. Hence institutionalization of these initiatives appears to be an essential element to sustain the long-term effort required to achieve real diversity in participation.

Succeeding with Undergraduates: Getting Beyond the Money

The colloquium also offered a view of how other initiatives serving minority students and those with limited financial means succeed in their mission to engage students. Molly Tovar of the Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program summarized this innovative program as an example of what is required to recruit successfully and retain students whose participation in higher education might otherwise be foregone. Tovar’s comments complemented the perspective of international educator presenters and reinforced several points about working with minority, lower-income, first generation college students—students that are typically highly motivated about the educational opportunities that they encounter. Essential to the GMS Program’s success were five factors:

- Successful engagement of targeted students requires approaching those students in a way that makes sense within the context of their community and group, using language, symbols, and members of that community to communicate most effectively
- Engagement requires handholding, not only of the students, but also their parents
- Emphasis is placed on the values needed to succeed—for the GMS Program, those are built around the concept of three R’s: Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships
- Success is fostered within a supportive educational environment that is conducive, helpful, friendly, and familiar
- Advocacy for the program begins early through education and outreach years prior to the first formal application of each student.

How Education Abroad Became a Reality for Me

Three education abroad alumni, now young professionals, spoke of the rewards of their study abroad experiences and reinforced many of the previously noted methods to engage students of color and limited income in study abroad. Keisha Robinson of the University of Maryland at College Park, Kari Miller of American University, and Evian Patterson of AED—each an education abroad returnee and all coincidentally working in international or higher education—spoke eloquently to the connections that made studying abroad a personal reality. Robinson and Miller also supplemented their personal experiences with a relevant professional setting: Robinson advises

anthropology students at University of Maryland, and Miller is a study abroad advisor at American University.

In recounting their respective life-changing experiences, the returnees focused on an overlapping set of themes that they found important to their decisions to study abroad. For Robinson, who was bitten by the travel bug early in her life and found her greatest comfort and satisfaction in an education abroad experience that is often described as heritage-centered, the elements that made studying abroad work for her (and for students she now engages to consider an overseas experience) were three-fold: students must be exposed early in life, must be able to envision themselves in the desired destination, and must be interested in and/or have a connection to the people or country they will be visiting. For Miller, a Spelman graduate, the essential elements in her undergraduate experience that made study abroad a reality were: transparency in the process of participation, availability of financial support for the experience, and a support network of fellow student returnees who served as role models. Patterson built on a complementary set of personal experiences, highlighting the critical university departmental and study abroad advising he received when he contemplated his application for a Fulbright award. Familial support, financial backing of his Fulbright award, and prior international travel experience were also key aspects of the grounding that made his overseas experience possible.

Focus Group Key Action Points

One of the goals of the colloquium was to create an action plan that can address the issues that impede achieving greater diversity among education abroad participants. To realize that goal, AED asked its participants to discuss, in a small group setting, a series of 10 questions, based on the material presented and discussed during the day's meeting. In this context, the colloquium hoped to tap into the collective professional and experiential expertise of the attendees, and to make the action plan a mutually owned outcome. The principal elements of these small group discussions are summarized in section 11 of these Proceedings.

Building on the Colloquium presentations and informed by the recommendations from the participants' small group discussions, this Proceedings Summary concludes with a Plan for Action from AED.

AED Colloquium on Diversity in Education Abroad: How to Change the Picture ***Challenging the Status Quo: A Plan for Action, A Call for Organizational Change***

1. Challenge U.S. colleges and universities to develop a thoughtful strategic plan for outreach and recruitment of students of color, and of

limited financial means, in part by suggesting the following list of constructive steps to take:

- a. Encourage institutional leadership to support an action plan for addressing diversity in education abroad and to make it an institutional priority. Couple that plan with making education abroad part of comprehensive campus internationalization. Tailor the plan to reflect the unique needs of each institution and its student body.
 - b. Design program offerings with participants of color (and of limited financial means) in mind so that programs are attractive to the broadest array of students.
 - c. Encourage campus and study abroad program entities, through collaboration with offices of student financial assistance, to design aid packages that will allow participants to study abroad in the summer and during the academic year.
 - d. Design program outreach and marketing so that it places special emphasis on student organizations and similar entities where diverse student populations are represented.
 - e. Diversify campus study abroad office and program provider staff, so that when a prospective participant comes to a presentation or visits the office, they will see someone who looks like them.
 - f. Design program materials and websites that are welcoming and representative of culturally diverse groups.
 - g. Consider multiple strategies for retaining interest and commitment of diverse populations, including clearly articulating the value the program can bring to the participant.
 - h. Encourage staff to develop a thorough understanding of the needs of students of color and how to connect those needs to a program's ability to meet those needs. Address personal issues that could be barriers to participation.
2. Research and compile information for a clearinghouse on financing of education abroad which AED would host on its website. Empower students to take responsibility for their education abroad financing with a tip sheet for students on how to better utilize funds and seek out cost-effective programs. Provide "student as consumer" materials to more fully inform prospective participants of the options available for reasonably priced programs.
 3. Establish an alumni group of ethnically diverse education abroad graduated returnees willing to talk with prospective applicants about the challenges they faced in studying abroad and the values they ascribe to that experience, and assist with their voluntary visits with students through a national programming effort.

4. Establish an education abroad teach-in (or appreciation) day each semester during which returnees discuss their study abroad experience, and share with prospective participants how such experiences informed, and even shaped, their academic and career trajectory.
5. Promote early (e.g., pre-collegiate) awareness of education abroad so that the concept is introduced at the secondary school level and as part of university marketing materials.
6. Find ways to encourage collaboration with other campus offices and units, including especially minority students affairs (or ethnic studies departments) and activities.
7. Encourage information sharing among education abroad professionals to gain from "best practices" experiences. For example, returnees might be required to "give back" by educating peers about their experiences and encouraging them to venture abroad. Such presentations could be built into the program curriculum.
8. Develop and advocate for a uniform data collection template that includes key demographic information about race, ethnicity, and student income group for national use to aid more comprehensive analysis of student participation rates, and to facilitate a national database on diversity in education abroad. Couple this data collection enhancement with a similarly uniform evaluation tool to elicit information about what was successful in the students' education abroad experience and what barriers were successfully overcome; ask for feedback on what if any effect the education abroad experience may have had on the students' evolving educational and professional goals; include demographic information as well as programmatic and academic data to facilitate comparative analysis.
9. Collect and disseminate more data on ethnicity from education abroad program applications to ascertain which types of program, study destinations, and subject matter are attractive to students of color and of limited financial means. Potential repositories of data include:
 - National level (i.e. Institute for International Education; NAFSA: Assoc. of International Educators; Forum on Education Abroad)
 - Sharing between like-minded and similarly situated institutions
 - Each campus (returning students and alumni, faculty, advisors)
 - Individuals (i.e. education abroad professionals)
10. Establish an annual institutional award to recognize and promote successful models for increasing diversity among study abroad participants that feature innovation and sustainable models for success.